DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 395 168 CE 071 608

TITLE	Expanding Horizons: A Program for Students Entering Nontraditional Technical Occupations. PY95 Final Detailed Report.
INSTITUTION	Austin Community Coll., Tex.
SPONS AGENCY	Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board, Austin.
PUB DATE	15 Aug 95
NOTE	14p.
PUB TYPE	Reports - Descriptive (141)
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	Academic Persistence; Adult Students; Career Choice; Career Planning; *College Programs; Community Colleges; *Nontraditional Occupations; Nontraditional Students; School Holding Power; *Sex Fairness; Student Recruitment; *Technical Occupations; Two Year Colleges; *Womens Education
IDENTIFIERS	*Austin Community College TX

ABSTRACT

The Expanding Horizons Project at Austin Community College successfully achieved its goals for Project Year 1994-95. During the year, the project accomplished the following: raised public awareness of the need to overcome gender bias, promoted career opportunities in nontraditional technical occupations to more than 1,200 prospective students, collaborated with more than 12 business and community organizations to promote nontraditional careers, effectively retained students in nontraditional majors through training and support services, and supported job search efforts in nontraditional occupations. The project provided support services to 165 students enrolled in majors leading to nontraditional occupations with 15 of these receiving financial assistance to defray the cost of dependent care, textbooks, tools, equipment, and supplies. For the 14 students who received financial assistance from the project during fall and spring semesters, the average earned grade point average was 3.2 and 93 percent were retained through spring or summer. The project also provided nontraditional career planning or information for 381 enrolled students who were prospective nontraditional majors. Individualized job search assistance was offered to graduating participants. Recommendations were made to place more emphasis on recruitment activities with single parents in the next year of the project. Recommendations also were made for multiyear funding of the project in order to improve the success rate in achieving the purpose of Perkins equity funding. (KC)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED 395 168

55160002
Sex Equity: Expanding Horizons,
A Program for Students Entering
Nontraditional Technical Occupations

PY95 Final Detailed Report
Discretionary Equity Grant
Austin Community College:

EXPANDING HORIZONS: A PROGRAM FOR STUDENTS ENTERING NONTRADITIONAL TECHNICAL OCCUPATIONS

August 15, 1995

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Submitted to:
Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board

Funded through:
Carl D. Perkins Technology Act of 1990

CE071608

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)
☑ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.
• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION 2

PUBLIC AWARENESS 3

NONTRADITIONAL CAREER PROMOTION 4

COLLABORATION 6

RETENTION 8

JOB SEARCH SUPPORT 10

PROJECT EVALUATION 11

LOOKING AHEAD 12

EXPANDING HORIZONS: A PROGRAM FOR STUDENTS ENTERING NONTRADITIONAL TECHNICAL EDUCATION
Austin Community College
PROJECT YEAR END REPORT 1994-95

INTRODUCTION

The Expanding Horizons Project at Austin Community College successfully achieved its goals for Project Year 1994-95. The Project **raised public awareness** of the need to overcome gender bias, **promoted career opportunities in nontraditional technical occupations** to over 1200 prospective students, **collaborated** with more than 12 business and community organizations to promote nontraditional careers, **effectively retained students in nontraditional majors** through training and support services, and **supported job search efforts in nontraditional occupations**. The Project received acknowledgements for services rendered to the community from the Texas Department of Human Services, Travis County Housing Authority, Caritas, and the Austin-Travis County Private Industry Council.

During the year, the Project **provided support services to 165 students enrolled in majors leading to nontraditional occupations** with 15 of these receiving financial assistance to defray the cost of dependent care, textbooks, tools, equipment, and/or supplies. For the 14 students who received financial assistance from the project during fall and spring semesters, the **average earned GPA was 3.2 and 93% were retained through spring or summer**. The Project also **provided nontraditional career planning or information for 381 enrolled students** who were prospective nontraditional majors.

To ensure that individuals, particularly single parents, received the assistance needed to consider occupations without gender bias, access college, prepare for the skilled workforce, and enter nontraditional occupations, the Project outlined in the original grant proposal specific actions it planned to undertake during Project Year 1994-95. The five Project objectives of increased public awareness, promotion of nontraditional occupations, collaboration, retention, and job search assistance and the activities that led to their achievement are detailed on the following pages. The report concludes with an evaluation of the Project and a commentary focused on the future.

PUBLIC AWARENESS

In order to raise public awareness of the need to overcome gender role stereotyping, gender bias, and gender discrimination, the Project first had to develop its own resources. The Project secured information and materials from the Women's Bureau, Wider Opportunities for Women, and Women Work!. Local resources including women working in nontraditional occupations were identified. Presentations and flyers were developed.

A Speakers' Bureau was developed and a brochure including equity topics and career choice issues was distributed to 52 organizations. Two press releases were issued by ACC Public Information and Project related articles were printed in One Voice, the monthly newsletter of the Austin Housing Authority, the Family Self-Sufficiency Newsletter, and Riverside Currents.

The Project provided information and support to ACC Staff and Organizational Development in offering workshops to faculty and staff regarding sexual harassment and the elimination of gender bias behaviors in the classroom. Letters were sent to vocational-technical faculty describing the Project and offering services including collaboration.

A **successful Forging Partnerships Conference that attracted 86 attendees was co-sponsored by the Project.** The theme Partnering for Self-Sufficiency provided the opportunity for the Project to promote public awareness of gender issues as well as stress the merits of nontraditional technical careers.

The Project Director was appointed to serve on the Austin-Travis County Worksforce Development Board Planning Team which provided strategic planning for the implementation of House Bill 642. This Texas bill and impending federal legislation seek to develop a needs-based, efficient, and coordinated job training and social services network to meet future workforce needs. Ms. Morris' **participation in these endeavors strengthened the community's understanding of the needs of gender - free career choice, the importance of vocational/technical education, and the value of Austin Community College**.

NONTRADITIONAL CAREER PROMOTION

As detailed below, the Project used a wide variety of methods to expand community knowledge of career opportunities in technical occupations. Over **381 direct, person-to-person contacts were made with prospective students; indirect contacts through publicity and agency contact reached over 900 others.**

It is difficult to provide an outcome measure of the number of these contacts who actually enrolled as new students in nontraditional majors. Referrals to nontraditional technical/vocational education generated by our information outreach may not have been made directly to the Project, and publicity activities may have attracted students to the college who then did not seek the additional support services of this specific Project. It is also likely that the heightened technical/vocational awareness created by the outreach activities will result in increasing student enrollment over several semesters to come. The Project is well aware that gender stereotyping plays a strong role in limiting the career choices of the disadvantaged single parents the Project targets, and that attitudinal change requires sustained effort over long periods of time.

Contacts with Agencies

The contacts made with local agencies to build linkages and develop coordination served the additional purpose of informing staff of the importance of expanding their clients' perspective of viable career choices. **The Project met with representatives of more than 12 agencies** including Texas Department of Human Services, Texas Employment Commission, Central Texas Mutual Housing Association, Rural Capital Area Private Industry Council, Austin-Travis County Private Industry Council, Travis County Housing Authority, American Learning Institute, Austin Families, and the Housing Authority of Austin. Linkages were also made by the Project with such educational organizations as area independent school districts, TEA Region XIII Service Center, University of Texas, Southwest Texas State University, area proprietary schools, ACC Adult Education, and numerous local high schools including alternative schools to enhance understanding of vocational/technical education and promote the merits of nontraditional occupations.

Staff and caseworkers from **local agencies made over 138 direct referrals to the Project**. They also served as an outlet for information about the benefits of technical/vocational education. Because many of these agencies routinely provide information to their clients about the Project, it is certain that many of the prospective students who initiated contact with the Project during the year did so as a direct result of their agency involvement. The agencies that made the greatest number of known referrals included Texas Department of Human Services, Adult Career Exploration Services, and local GED programs. The Housing Authority of the City of Austin sent 35 and the Travis County Housing Authority sent 38 of their Family Self-Sufficiency clients to the Project for career and educational planning and enrollment assistance.

Presentations

The Project made presentations directly to several groups of agency clients who were prospective students. The Project met with members of ACC GED classes, TDHS Life Skills classes, New Student Orientations, and area high schools and teen parent programs and participated in the ACC Tele-Orientation. Class visits were made to more than 15 Parallel Studies classes. These presentations provided information about technical education, support services, career planning and transition to college.

Publicity

The Project published and distributed Expanding Horizons brochures to promote nontraditional career choice. The brochure described Project services of career, educational, and personal counseling, financial assistance, and community referrals, touted technical education, and discussed the importance of gender-free career choice.

Publicity about technical/vocational education and/or the Project appeared in the American Statesman and college newspapers directed to students, faculty, and staff. Additional publicity was generated through the Project newsletter which was sent to faculty and the student mailing list. The college schedule of classes and the ACC Catalog carried Project information in highlighted sections. Technical faculty received special flyers to alert them to the needs of nontraditional students and single parents and to the resources available to them. A brochure presenting the Project Speakers' Bureau was mailed to over 50 local clubs and organizations, and public service announcements were developed for television and radio. Campus postings highlighted information sessions as well as special projects and presentations.

Workshops

During Career Empasis Week in March, workshops stressed a comprehensive approach to career decision-making including consideration of labor market information, work values, and personality and interest patterns. Videos of technical careers were shown that presented both men and women in nontraditional careers.

"My Turn Now" was offered four times during the year to attract and assist women considering returing to college. "I Did It, You Can Too!" - a student panel that shared experiences in overcoming obstacles to returning to school and staying in technical/vocational education - was offered twice. Both workshops presented information about nontraditional careers. Over 96% of the 88 workshop participants rated the experience as very beneficial.

Information sessions about the Project were held twice a month at the Riverside and Northridge campuses. Throughout the year **217 individuals attended** one of these sessions and completed the initial intake process.

COLLABORATION

The Project continued an Advisory Committee of diverse membership to receive input from business and industry and facilitate interagency cooperation. The Advisory Committee met as a whole two times during the year to provide guidance and review Project activities. The four subcommittees, Resource Development, Communications and Marketing, Mentoring and Gender Equity, and Agency Linkage, met as needed to address subcommittee objectives. The Communications Subcommittee issued press releases, published a Speakers' Bureau brochure, and developed a script for public service announcements. The Agency Linkage Subcommittee developed a presentation for agency boards stressing the need for continued coordination of joint agency efforts and institutional funding support for the Project.

The Project collaborated extensively with the Travis County Housing Authority and City of Austin Housing Authority to foster joint family self-sufficiency programming. The Project was invited to make career information presentations to Family Self-Sufficiency (FSS) clients where the benefits of nontraditional careers were highlighted, and the Project and other ACC staff provided workshop support for the life skills development and career exploration activities of these clients. These FSS projects made over 70 referrals to the Project for individual career and educational planning and included Project information in their mailings and newsletters.

Throughout the year the Project sought partners for cooperative funding support for day care for students pursuing nontraditional careers. Lack of affordable, quality day care is second only to gender-based career decision-making in minimizing single parent enrollment in nontraditional majors. The TDHS JOBS Program and the Austin-Travis County Private Industry Council were interested in referring clients to the Project and were willing to provide day care for those whose career plans they approved, but time limitations for training and cumbersome federal regulations prevented a truly collaborative approach to ensuring self-sufficiency. The Project found a more flexible partner in the City of Austin Early Childhood Services Program, and plans are underway to secure Community Development Block Grant funding for day care in October 1995.

The Project collaborated with Capital Area Tech-Prep Consortium to foster dissemination of information and facilitate student movement through the Tech-Prep pipeline. Brochures were distributed during public school visits, counselors assisted with college enrollment, and the Project consulted with faculty in Tech Prep departments and provided counseling to students to support their success. Through participation on the Consortium Marketing Committee, the Project worked to promote the tech-prep concept throughout the 10 county region. The Project also made presentations regarding transition to college to DelValle and Johnson High students participating in a joint ACC-Advanced Micro Devices school-to-work program in Semiconductor Technology.

To improve internal coordination of services with other Perkins' providers at Austin Community College, the Project Director participated in the Special Populations Planning Committee. Additionally, the Project met monthly with student development personnel involved with the Single Parent Project and services to Disadvantaged students to promote ease of student access to services, coordinate financial and staff resources, plan joint recruitment and linkage efforts, and share expertise and information. Expanding Horizons, Breaking Barriers and Making Transitions (single parent and displaced homemakers), Opening Doors (homeless discretionary project), and Building Futures (formula-funded services for disadvantaged services) worked as a team under the umbrella of the Support Center to provide consistent and comprehensive services to these special populations college-wide.

The Project Director, Sherry Morris, maintained associate membership in the Tech-Prep Consortium and the Capital Area Workforce Alliance to acquire up-to-date information regarding the area labor market and facilitate cooperative endeavors in technical/vocational training. Ms. Morris continued to serve as a Mayoral appointee on the Program Coordinating Committee of the Family Self-Sufficiency Program of the Housing Authority of Austin. She was also an active member of the Austin-Travis County Workforce Development Board Planning Team.

A **successful Forging Partnerships Conference co-sponsored by the Project attracted 86 attendees** from a wide variety of area agencies focusing on the theme Partnering for Self-Sufficiency. Travis County Judge Bill Aleshire spoke of the perils and promises of collaboration and ACC President Bill Segura discussed the role of the community college in self-sufficiency partnerships. Much of the program was experiential with participants actively involved in brainstorming to identify new areas for collaboration and new strategies for partnering. Partipants were very enthusiastic about the opportunity to interact with one another in new ways and to develop drafts of partnership possibilities at the grass roots level. Much support was generated for effective career exploration activities for clients that introduced them to the merits of nontraditional, technical careers and supplied current area labor market information.

RETENTION

The Project provided a variety of support services to promote the retention of students preparing for nontraditional careers. The Project counted **165 eligible enrolled students who availed themselves of one or more of the services** described below.

Of particular note is the retention and progress of the Project participants who received financial assistance with day care, textbooks, tools, equipment, and/or supplies this year. The 14 students who received assistance through May 15, 1995 earned an **average GPA of 3.2 on an average of 39 earned credit hours**. They **passed 97% of their classes** and completed 85% of the classes they attempted. At the end of Spring '95, 100% were in good academic standing and making satisfactory progress with 2 receiving honors designations. **Ninety-three (93%)of these students were retained** through the end of Spring or Summer semester and 4 graduated.

Individual and Group Counseling

Over **165 students received career and educational assessment, advising and/or counseling** to assist them in exploring the benefits and appropriateness of a nontraditional technical major. Personal counseling also focused on reducing sexual stereotyping, identifying and overcoming internal and external barriers, and developing linking and networking skills. Other interventions included clarifying and setting goals, problem-solving, and monitoring progress. These services were available during day and evening hours and by appointment and on a walk-in basis.

Financial Assistance

The Project used Expanding Horizons and Perkins formula funds to provide **financial assistance to 15** students in nontraditional majors to defray the cost of dependent care and/or textbooks, tools, equipment, and supplies. Four of these recipients were single parents. Each participant had a least one counseling session in which a plan for educational, career, and personal success was discussed and assistance seeking federal grants and loanswas offered. Outreach and monitoring efforts encouraged participants, assisted them in staying on track, and provided timely interventions.

Workshops

Over **34 free workshops** were offered to provide students with the skills needed to select a satisfying career, write resumes and mount effective job searches, communicate effectively and assertively, improve self-esteem, develop effective learning strategies and methods, and improve problem-solving, self-management, and coping abilities.

Access to Community Services

The Project made more than **212 referrals to community agencies** such as TDHS and the JOBS program, TEC, CCMS, Legal Aid, the People's Community Clinic, HOBO, and Caritas among others. The Project worked closely with area housing authorities to identify candidates for their family self-sufficiency programs.

Twenty-two different handouts providing information on area resources were developed or updated and prominently displayed on each campus. Community services such as low cost medical, legal, housing, food, and utilities assistance were highlighted as were parenting skills training, affordable day care, and employment assistance information.

Educational Materials

A **textbook loan program provided texts for 57 students** during the year. A lending library made available books, tapes and other materials related to women's issues as well as reference materials on gender equity, financial aid, support groups, career planning, and academic success. The Project provided various pamphlets, handouts, and resource collections for students. Handouts included information on test-taking skills, time management, parenting concerns, the effects of abusive relationships, and community resources. Informational brochures about area agencies and services were displayed.

Student Newsletter

Each semester the Project published and mailed the newsletter On The Move to interested and prospective students on the mailing list. This publication provided information on Project and community services and resources, career planning and employment, financial assistance for tuition, and news of upcoming workshops and events. Special attention was given to a variety of equity issues. The newsletter also highlighted the successes of Project participants in special sections, encouraged students to participate in community service activities, and honored those selected to Phi Theta Kappa Honor Society and Who's Who.

Special Projects

In conjunction with the single parent project, Expanding Horizons instituted a Kids Clothing Closet this year. Donations of clothing were solicited and a very successful participant clothing exchange day was held. The projects worked with ACC staff and faculty to provide Christmas gifts for needy children of participants as well as holiday food for the families. The projects also formed a partnership with the Austin Jaycees to provide free movie and special events tickets for children and their parents.

JOB SEARCH SUPPORT

The Project worked closely with all Vocational/Technical Divisions to support educational achievement and career attainment for their students, particularly those who were equity students. Direct **contacts were made with 19 departments and 82 faculty members** to facilitate the transition of nontraditional majors, particularly single parents, into their classes and programs as well as to offer assistance in the transition to work and in job development for equity students.

To assist students with the development of future job-seeking and maintance skills, the Project **sponsored 4 skill-building workshops**, provided labor market information, and participated in Career Emphasis Week. To assist students in nontraditional majors prepare for the unique stresses and pressures they are likely to experience on-the-job, the Project sponsored two workshops targeting women to help them develop independent behaviors, assertive skills, higher self-expectations, and personal support systems. At least two other workshops included components on stress management, time management, conflict resolution, and negotiating skills.

Individualized job search assistance was offered to graduating participants. Followup contact will be made in September to offer on-the-job support through telephone or in-person contact. **Ten participants who were funded this year or last graduated during the Project year for a graduation rate of 28%.**

PROJECT EVALUATION

As proposed, the Project used both formative and summative methods of evaluation. The eleven points of evaluation are addressed below:

1. The number of contacts with prospective students and with business/industry, education, and human resource organizations was documented. When rosters or sign-up sheets were impractical, estimates were used. The recruitment activities of the Project reached over 1281 prospective students and more than 12 organizations.

2. The number of presentations to raise public awareness of equity issues and increase knowledge of the benefits of technical education was not fully documented. The Project worked closely with counselors and vocational faculty, public information staff, and the Speakers' Bureau volunteers to develop and promote such presentations, but was not always kept informed when they took place. Best estimates place presentations by the Project and other sources at 27.

3. Workshops were evaluated by participants at workshop end. Over 96% of workshop participants rated their experience as very beneficial. Over 40 recruitment and retention workshops were offered.

4. Contacts with equity students and services provided were documented.

5. Academic standing and degree progress was reviewed each semester. Individual data was used in planning with each student and collective data was analyzed to determine needed programmatic changes.

6. Retention data was calculated by the Project Director using ACC database information. Ninety-three percent (93%) of funded participants were retained.

7. Graduation data was researched by the Project Director. Four of fifteen or twenty seven percent (27%) of funded participants graduated with AAS degrees

8. The Special Populations Director tracked Equity students in terms of Performance Measures. ACC is working to improve data collection and update, including declaration of major, which will result in more accurate outcome data.

9. A student evaluation survey was not conducted this year.

10. The Project Director held monthly evaluation sessions with counselors supporting the Project and 2 meetings with the Advisory Committee.

11. The Advisory Committee did not conduct an external evaluation of the Project, relying instead on the evaluative data prepared for this report.

LOOKING AHEAD

By achieving the five objectives established for Project Year 1994-95 of improved public awareness, promotion of nontraditional technical occupations, collaboration, retention, and job search support, the Project has made significant movement toward achievement of the long term goal for Perkins Equity Projects. During the past year this Project has built a strong foundation for future successes, and, providing adequate funding continues to be received for support personnel, critical operating expenses, and costly financial assistance for dependent care, textbooks, tools, equipment, and supplies, these successes can be accelerated in the future. Linkages can be expanded and welded into creative and more effective cooperative endeavors as evidenced by the Project's impending collaboration with the City of Austin to seek Community Block Grant Development funds to supplement Project resources in meeting the day care needs of qualifying students. The heightened awareness of the community about the benefits of technical/vocational education and the resources available to those who pursue it will serve as a stepping stone to increased enrollment. The range and delivery of recruitment activities can be improved to promote greater consideration of nontraditional occupations.

Internally, the Project plans next year to place more emphasis on recruitment activities with single parents who are poorly represented in nontraditional majors. The Project Director will also work with ACC staff to improve data collection and tracking mechanisms to enhance accurate identification of nontraditional majors and incorporate longitudinal tracking of prior participants in research plans.

Externally, the Project recommends that grant funds continue to be made available to equity programs and that these grants be multi-year. The amount of funding for individual grant proposals should be based on project size and anticipated impact, with special consideration given for prior successful performance. Emphasis should be placed on funding personnel to engage in activities that seek to overcome gender bias and recruit disadvantaged women to nontraditional careers. Once attitudes are changed and career choices expanded, increased funds will be needed for dependent care. The Project also recommends that Project evaluation criteria be specified, similar to evaluation procedures in place for TRIO programs through the U.S. Department of Education.

Internal improvements in Project design and administrative support coupled with a foundation of secure, multi-year external funding should improve the success rate of the Project in achieving the promise of Perkins equity funding. Through innovative outreach efforts to disadvantaged single parents, sensitive response to the needs of students in nontraditional majors, and effective collaborative community endeavors, **this Project has, and can continue to provide significant assistance to individuals to encourage them to make career decisions best suited to their potential and free of gender-role stereotypes.**